The Seed Sower.

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Spring Song.

The fragrance of awakening flowers
Quickens the breath of Spring;
Exulting in their bridal bowers
The mated wood-birds sing;
The lark is up; the gentle air
Carols light music everywhere.

The bee sings at his lonely toil,
The cricket at his play;
The red-breast scans the fresh-turned soil;
The meadows, pied with May,
Shimmer beneath the trembling blue.—
Since all is song, I warble too.

To One in Sorrow.

Patience! Time's gentle-pressing palm
Is on thy wound. Thou canst not feel
The virtue of the looks that calm,
The quiet of the words that heal;
Yet some glad morning thou shalt rise
To taste again joy's sweet surprise.

So from the day that saw it fade
The plant takes heart. Thou canst not mark
The hueless bud, the wrinkled blade,
Forcing their prison cold and dark;
Yet in some fostering, sunny hour,
Doth spring to life a new-born flower.

ALFRED HAYES.

Clay in the Hands of the Potter.

A SERMON

BY THE LATE REV. HENRY BONNER.

"Then I went down to the potter's house, and behold, he wrought a work on the wheels."—JER. xviii. 3.

This figure of clay in the hands of the potter is one which has been largely used by the advocates of the Calvinistic interpretation of the Gospel. It is taken as setting forth the absolute sovereignty of God, His power and His right to deal with man as He wills. I remember once hearing a preacher use it with grim effect. "The potter," he said, "takes the clay and moulds it into what shape he pleases. He may keep it and guard it as precious, because it is the work of his hands, or he may break it into fragments. So with man; God has made him, and God can do what He pleases with him; He can raise him to everlasting bliss, or send him to everlasting darkness and pain." That is a grim Gospel. Indeed, one does not exactly see how it can fairly be described as "good news" at all. You may just as well say that a father has the right to break the neck of as many of his children as he pleases. The one would be about as just as the other.

No doubt there are passages in Paul's epistles which look in the direction of this doctrine, but

they admit of a different interpretation. The teaching of Paul, like the teaching of Christ, has been made to mean many things which Paul did not mean. But even if we could not find a more reasonable interpretation of such passages, one would still have to say that doctrine is not true. It makes God less righteous than a good man. And how does it square with the great affirmation, which makes the core of the Gospel, God's love for mankind? "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world."

This certainly is not the teaching of the figure of clay in the hands of the potter as Jeremiah uses it. It points to another, and more hopeful and inspiring doctrine. Jeremiah goes down to the potter's house, and watches him at his work. He sees him take a lump of clay and deftly mould it to the form or pattern he has in his mind. But while he is at work on it some flaw reveals itself in it, it is marred in the potter's hand. And then he breaks it and puts it on the wheel again and reshapes it. And as the prophet looks on this, light breaks in on his burdened and perplexed mind as to God's dealings with Israel. God has had Israel under His care and guidance, He had chosen it for a special work and to fill a special place in the history and education of the world. But Israel had not been wholly tractable in God's hand. It had broken from God's leading again and again. It was so in the time of Jeremiah. Read the prophecies and you will see what was the matter with this nation. The vessel was marred in the Potter's hand. And the cracks and flaws were not slight either. What will come of it? is the painful question in Jeremiah's mind. What will God do with such a wayward, perverse race? What can He do with it? The question has taken deep hold of him, and it is with this painfully pressing on him that he goes down to the potter's house, and then as he watches the potter at his wheel he finds the answer. God will do with Israel as the potter does with his marred vessel. He will break it, and remake it, though maybe into a vessel of less noble shape and use than before.

Mark then, first, that the potter is working with a plan in his mind. He knows what he is about with his work. If there is any pertinency in the figure at all, the teaching is that God has a plan or purpose to which He is working. This figure cuts clean against the notion that God's acts are the arbitrary exercise of sovereign power which Calvinism made them. God does as He pleases, it is said. True, He does. But not in the sense that His will is arbitrary. It is not, "I choose to do this, and there's an end of the matter." He does what He pleases, but He has purpose and reason. Shall we say in what He does He is not working at random, He has some ideal in His mind towards which He is working?

This world, this material world, is an orderly world. I care not how it has come to be what it is; it makes no difference. It is built on a plan. There is order in it, mind in it. If I take up a book and read it, I can read it because there is mind in it. It is intelligible to me because it is the product of mind. If I can read the world, if I can find an order in it, it is because there is mind in it. And mind is only another word for purpose, plan. And if I find order in the material world, I cannot believe that it fails just at the point at which nature takes its highest forms, and produces its most precious fruit—man and man's life.

I believe there is in the history of mankind an order as real as we find in the physical world, and the human race has not reached the point at which it stands to-day in a haphazard way. God has it in hand, and He is shaping it, according to some plan or pattern He has in His mind. Mankind is not drifting, it is moving on through the generations in an orderly manner, notwithstanding all the surface confusion. You see it if you read history in a large way. Mankind is being led toward some goal. It would be easy if there were time to give illustration on illustration of the truth that there is some power which is working through nations for other ends than nations always propose to themselves. History teaches me that there is something above man's will shaping man's destiny. There is, what the Bible teaches there is, a divine will at the back of all things, a divine purpose in all. God has His plan—I know the word as applied to God is open to objection, but it is the best we can use—which He is slowly working out. He is working on the human race as the potter on the wheel.

And—and this is the part that will come home to some of us most closely—this plan must take in our individual life. Mankind is

made up of nations, nations are made up of individuals, and God, as some one has said, does not generalise. God has His plan for you. God wants to do something with you. God wants to make something of you.

The thing that God seems to be after with mankind is what we sum up in that great word, one of the greatest man has coined, righteousness. Look down the history of mankind; to me it is as clear as daylight that mankind has ever been moving towards this. Nations that have made for this most fully have endured longest, have taken the highest place. The nations that have not been mindful of it have been broken.

So it is with the individual. God's ideal for you, His purpose with you now, is to make you righteous. That is what God is after in a thousand ways with you. That is what He has you on the wheel for. All the conditions of your life, your work, your pains and sorrows and pleasures, all mean this. If you will get hold of that thread, and follow it, you will find that a great deal of the tangle of this life will, little by little, clear itself for you. Many things we only dimly discern: but this, I think, we can clearly see, that the Potter is trying to shape us to a noble form.

Robert Browning puts it:—

> He fixed thee 'mid this dance
> Of plastic circumstance;
> This present, thou, forsooth, would'st fain arrest:
> Machinery just meant
> To give thy soul its bent,
> Try thee, and turn thee forth, sufficiently impressed.

That is it. This ever-changing world, this dance of plastic circumstance, is God's wheel for shaping us, and the divine ideal is that which makes the glory of God Himself—righteousness, that is the end for every man.

The vessel, we read, is marred in the potter's hands. Jeremiah meant by that that Israel had not answered as it should have done to God's teaching. It was disobedient, idolatrous, corrupt. It seemed to Jeremiah as if truth, justice, integrity, devotion to the highest and best, were on the point of extinction, if they had not already gone. The Jewish race had, and has, fine qualities; but their great leader hit the mark when he called them a stiff-necked, perverse people. They were always breaking from under the yoke. The vessel is marred in the hands of the potter. But, mark, it is not the potter that mars the vessel.

God has put us on the wheel. He is at work on us, but He leaves us free. God is seeking to mould us to His ideal for you. "A spark disturbs our clod." There is something in man which is not of earth, which does not belong to nature. God is in man. That sentence in one of the epistles is, I believe, absolutely, literally true. It is a tremendous affirmation, and if there is any truth in religion, soberest truth, we are partakers of the divine nature. There is something in you disturbing you when you do wrong, something which casts a shadow over your spirits when you fall below your best, something which from time to time stings you and puts you on reaching after nobler life. There is some ideal of what you should do and be which visits you at times. It comes without your seeking, it calls you to greater life and finer ways. Do you know what these things are? They are the Potter at the wheel. They are God trying to mould you. They seem only as slender gossamer threads in you. You hardly know at times whether they are real or not. They are among the most real and certainly the divinest things in your experience. It is the Divine Master touching you with gentle fingers, trying to leave His impress on you, seeking to fashion you. Impulse, aspiration, insight, vision of something higher than you have reached, these come to you, and these are the Master at work on us.

Are not the flaws and warps and breaks in our life, those we know ourselves and feel most deeply, due to this, that we have not followed as closely as we should these inward monitions? We have not been as plastic under the Master's touch, we have not wrought out as we might what God has wrought in us. What man of us is there who does not feel that he would have been a finer, a nobler man, had he given a readier, more complete response to the vision of good and the impulse to good which he has had? Be sure that God's hands are on you; God touches you; the best that is in you of light and desire is God in you—surrender yourself to them.

The potter breaks the marred vessel, and puts it on the wheel again, and re-shapes it. The potter's skill is not to be baffled. He wants to

give his ideal reality. And he will shape and break, shape and break again, till the clay has taken the form he will.

It is said sometimes that we are set here on probation. And life is a probation; it tests us, and shows our strain and quality. But that is a misleading word. We mean by "probation" that God sets us here to see what we shall make of it. He sets us to walk on a knife edge, as it were, and if we get across safely, then He will stretch out a hand to welcome us. But that is a poor account to give of life. God is not experimenting with man, the final issue all uncertain. Man's ignorance, weakness, perverseness, and sin will not baffle Him. They are all in the account to start with, and God is equal to them. He knows the sort of material He has to work on. "He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust." He knows the point from which we start, and that it can only be from weakness we come to strength, from ignorance to wisdom, from sin to righteousness.

We are on the wheel and God is seeking to mould us. If we take His touch and impress, it is well with us. But, if we do not, what then? Will God cast us as rubbish to the void? Is there a waste heap in the universe to which the failures, children of the Eternal Father, are flung? Is that the end? Or will God break us and re-make us?

I cannot think that God loses His hold on man when he passes through the gate of death. I do not think the patience of God is exhausted by one single life, a life so brief. Think of it. You say we shall live for ever, and yet man's destiny is cast on a point. We are to live for ever, and yet God's patience and God's effort with man are exhausted in the few years of his life here,—years that are only as the tick of a clock compared with immortality. It cannot be. It were easier to believe that we go at death into eternal darkness than to believe that. One remembers what Christ says: "The Good Shepherd seeketh the wandering sheep until He find it." That is parable and one would not press it. But does that mean, take it how you will, only this life? Is that the spirit of solicitude—the infinite patience and unwearing love—which breathes into the words "until He find it?" No. The patience and love of God will follow us all through death, and vessels that are marred here, will be put on the wheel again there.

I do not say this is an easy and comfortable sort of doctrine. That is not how it presents itself to me. If the vessel is marred here, it will be broken before the Potter can reshape it. "He shall break them like a potter's vessel." We do not know what that breaking may be. If a man is set in evil, he must be broken or cast into some fiery furnace before he can be formed anew.

If a man cleanse himself from evil, he shall be a vessel unto honour, meet for the Master's service, and fit for every noble work.

Notes on the Conference.

The Seventh Triennial Conference has come and gone: ministers and delegates have returned to their homes, and after a week of mild and lawful dissipation, our churches resume their daily round of obscure labours, let us hope with some increase of hope and power, some lifting of the heart, some widening of the outlook. The first word to be said about the conference is that of grateful acknowledgment of the boundless hospitality and the admirable arrangements of our Leicester friends. Every possible want was provided for with a forethought, skill, and generosity that left nothing to be desired. The local committee rose to the occasion, and its secretaries, Miss Gittins and Mr. Cooper, worked with ten-horse power and never failing tact. One special feature of the hospitality must be recorded—the kindly help rendered by members of other denominations. Episcopalians, Congregationalists, Baptists, and Wesleyans offered themselves as hosts, and many of our members were brought, for a few days, into strange but most interesting ecclesiastical fellowship. Hosts and guests were alike pleased with each other. That a Unitarian minister should be the guest of a High-Church vicar is enough to make some of the old bigotries turn in their graves. But minister and vicar will, happily, think more kindly of each other after hob-nobbing together over the breakfast table. The hospitality of Archdeacon Stocks and other clergymen makes all the more regrettable the line one or two speakers thought fit to take.

To come to the intellectual fare. The gem of the conference was, undoubtedly, Mr. Stopford Brooke's paper on "Dr. Martineau." Mr. Brooke was at his best, and how good that best is everyone knows. It was the finest, truest word that has yet been said about our great leader, none the less beautiful in its appreciation of Martineau's powers, because of its frank recognition of his limitations. It was quite clear that the speaker felt it to be a happy moment, and it may be questioned whether he did not as much enjoy the delivering of his paper as the audience did the hearing of it. The brightly-beaming face, the animated gestures, the heart-felt tones told of a congenial subject, and greatly moved all who had the privilege of being present. It was the word of inspiration for which we had been waiting, and we felt that if every other speaker failed, here was that which would make the conference distinctive and distinguished.

It is a matter, however, for congratulation that the conference speakers reached and maintained a very high level. Mr. Wicksteed's paper on "Sin" and Mr. Jacks' paper on "Public Worship" excited great admiration, both for their philosophical powers and their deep conviction. They were papers that demanded close attention, but they were followed with rapt interest by unusually large audiences. They both had the merit of provoking thought and dissent. No discussion followed Mr. Wicksteed's paper, yet, had discussion been allowed, we feel sure that a joint or two in the speaker's armour might have been pierced. The discussion on Mr. Jacks' paper was one of the best we ever had at a conference—every speaker had something to say worth hearing, and said it with clearness and point. The paper was a worthy conclusion of a notable conference.

It was pleasant to see Mrs. Humphry Ward, and a great crowd had assembled to hear the most popular novelist of the day. Alas! hearing was out of the question for about three-fourths of the audience. The room was too big for Mrs. Ward's voice, and, in addition, she spoke far too rapidly. Yet, her fascinating personality made itself felt, and there were those who were quite satisfied, though they did not hear half-a-dozen sentences. Those who did hear felt that Mrs. Ward hardly did her subject or herself justice. We understand that the paper is to be revised for publication, when no doubt it will be seen to be entirely worthy of Mrs. Ward's great reputation.

The Mayor's Conversazione was a most successful function. Twelve hundred guests assembled, and the Mayor, Mr. Alderman Windley, made a graceful and telling speech. Mayors of other towns—please take notice!

The vote of thanks to the Chairman, Dr. Blake Odgers, was well deserved. The conference has had no more popular guide, philosopher, and friend than our own genial Q.C. His tact and firmness, skill and patience were admirably displayed, tempered by that kindly humour which is worth more than many other virtues that thrust themselves into the front places.

The conference was of such a high order that one or two unsatisfactory features may be dropped into oblivion. The public meeting!—but no, wild horses shall not make us say a word about the public meeting!

There were other features of the meetings on which we might linger with pleasure—the sermon, the Communion service, the business meeting, and Mr. Worthington's timely and suggestive paper on "The Supply of Ministers." But for these things we must refer our readers to the pages of the *Inquirer*. Suffice it here to record the great success of the conference as a whole, and the immense pleasure, given and received, not only from the many quickening papers, speeches, and discussions, but from the renewal of old friendships, the stirring things of social converse, and the general uplift of hearts, which sent us all home rejoicing.

The every-day cares and duties which men call drudgery are the weights and counterpoises of the clock of time, giving its pendulum a true vibration, and its hands a regular motion; and when they cease to hang upon the wheels, the pendulum no longer swings, the hands no longer move, the clock stands still.

Biographical Addresses.

By THE LATE REV. DR. SADLER.

JOHN WOOLMAN.—*(Continued.)*

It is no part of my object to say whether John Woolman was right or wrong in his notions. In some things we should probably differ from him, and give what would seem to us good reasons for differing; but there are some in which we should find it very difficult to answer his arguments. I have no doubt he under-estimated the value of those arts and occupations which help to beautify life; but it is well to look at things in that fresh way in which he sets us an example, and ask ourselves whether they are good or evil, and not take for granted that we may freely follow the customs of our times. That his motives were of the purest kind there can, I think, be no question; and he had a wholesome fear of letting men justify themselves in evil practices by the thought, "such and such good men do the like." His heart was full of human sympathy. He wished to have a quick and lively feeling of the afflictions of his fellow creatures, whose situation is difficult. He felt that God had given him this feeling, and he thought that the well-to-do should be put in remembrance of the condition of some of their fellowmen, especially the weakly and aged, and children brought up without instruction. In an illness he had, not very long before he died, he was for a time in a sort of trance, in which he forgot who he was, and it seemed to him that he saw all human beings as a mass in great suffering, and that he was a part of the mass, and henceforth was not to consider himself a distinct or separate being. He said: "If we consider the life of our blessed Saviour when on earth, as it is recorded by His followers, we shall find that one uniform desire for the eternal and temporal good of mankind discovered itself in all His actions. If we observe men, both apostles and others, in many different ages, who have really come to the unity of the spirit and the fellowship of the saints, there still appears the like disposition, and in them the desire of the real happiness of mankind has out-balanced the desire of ease, liberty, and, many times, life itself."

With his simple habits John Woolman was enabled to earn enough to supply the wants of his family without devoting nearly the whole of his time to business. He did not care about laying up much money; for his rule was that if wise instruction, a good example, and the knowledge of some honest employment were given to his children, they would not want much besides. "These, with the blessing of Providence, are sufficient for their happiness, and are more likely to prove so, than laying up treasures for them, which are often rather a snare than any real benefit."

All the leisure he could get he wanted for his missionary labours. And these labours showed what spirit he was of. His object was not to make other Quakers like himself, or to convert them to his own opinions on doctrinal matters; but to call forth in them the genuine spirit of religion, and to lead them to live accordingly. His view was that all men who love God, and are animated by this feeling in their conduct, are of one religion.

But here let us dwell a little while on what religion was to him. He said: "There is a principle, which is pure, placed in the human mind, which in different places and ages hath had different names; it is, however, pure, and proceeds from God. It is deep, and inward, confined to no forms of religion, nor excluded from any, where the heart stands in perfect sincerity. In whomsoever this takes root, and grows, of what nation soever, they become brethren in the best sense of the expression." Again, he says: "I found no narrowness respecting sects and opinions; but believed that sincere, upright-hearted people, in every society, who truly love God, are accepted of Him.

He strove after inward stillness that the voice of God in his soul might be heard by him; and he felt sure that the best way to spread religion was by living in such a way as would reach "the pure witness of the heart" in others.

I might say much more about his catholicity of spirit.

He had also a good word for the heathen. "Many nations," he says, "believed in and worshipped a plurality of deities; but I do not believe therefore that they were all wicked. Idolatry indeed is wickedness; but it is the *thing*, not the *name* which is so. Real idolatry

is to pay that adoration to a creature which is known to be due only to the true God. He who professeth to believe in one Almighty Creator, and in His Son Jesus Christ, and is yet more intent on the honours, profits and friendships of the world, than he is in singleness of heart to stand faithful to the Christian religion, is in the channel of idolatry; while the Gentile, who, under some mistaken opinions, is notwithstanding established in the true principle of virtue, and humbly adores an Almighty power, may be of that number who fear God and work righteousness."

What John Woolman cared about was that genuine piety of the heart in which the love of God shows itself not only by fervent worship and devout trust, but also by genial kindness and sympathy with the suffering. There were two evils which he was especially anxious to do away with as utterly inconsistent with right feeling towards God and towards man.

One of these was slavery. Happily there is no longer any need to speak of the condition of those poor creatures, who were treated not as men, but as goods and chattels to be bought and sold. What we have to consider is the method in which he set about to remove this crying evil. He acknowledged that the masters might intend to govern their slaves reasonably and make them happy; but he said the relation was an improper one, tending on the one hand to be unfit for righteous government, and on the other hand to degradation. No such practice could be begun by those who have Christian feeling, but the mind becomes accustomed and reconciled to things which exist, and often fails to perceive when they are wrong, though it would do so at once if they had not already existed and it was proposed now to enter upon them. "Under such treatment," he said, "what must the slaves think of the professed followers of Jesus, and how must their groans ascend to that Almighty Being, who is 'the refuge of the oppressed?'" He tells of a man who was on a visit to a neighbourhood in which a slave-holding friend dwelt. The intention of the traveller was to stay with his friend; but, observing on the way the distressed appearance of the slaves, he kindled a fire in the wood hard by, and there spent the night. The friend afterwards reproved him for not availing himself of the hearty welcome of an old acquaintance. The traveller replied, "Ever since I lodged by thy field, I have wanted an opportunity to speak with thee: the matter was, I intended to have come to thy house for entertainment, but seeing thy slaves at their work, and observing the manner of their dress I had no liking to come to partake with thee; and, as I lay by the fire that night, I thought that, as I was a man of substance, thou wouldst have received me freely; but, if I had been as poor as one of thy slaves, and had no power to help myself, I should have received from thy hand no kinder usage than they." John Woolman also resolved that he would have no pleasure or profit, directly or indirectly, from slave labour. Accordingly he declined to gratify his palate with sugar, and refrained from dealing with those who derived their gain from slave traffic. At one time he had yielded to those who held the opinion that though slavery was an evil to be done away with, the slave might justifiably be retained in bondage till thirty years of age; and, as executor to a friend, Woolman had sold a slave upon these conditions, viz.: to serve without wages till thirty years old and then to be free. Having made this arrangement, he was much exercised as to whether he had done right, and after a little while he and his co-executor determined to pay, out of their own possessions, the sum of money necessary to undo the wrong which they felt they had done.

The other evil which engaged his particular attention was war; the desire to cherish the spirit of love and peace "arising," as he expressed it, "very fresh in me," from thinking on the innumerable afflictions which the proud, fierce spirit produceth, and of the hatred which grows up in nations engaged in war with each other, and is transmitted by father to the minds of their children.

John Woolman's missionary journeys were of wide extent. Not only was he assiduous in attending the meetings of his own religious body far and near in his own country; but, as I have already stated, he made repeated visits to England, and his labours extended to native Indians.

It was while he was in England he caught the small-pox, which terminated fatally in his fifty-third year. During his illness that "heavenly wing," of which he had spoken, as

spread over some of the social meetings at which he was present at friends' houses was still over him. He had said "how safe, how quiet is that state, where the soul stands in pure obedience to the voice of Christ, that a watchful care is maintained, not to follow the voice of the stranger!" And so it was with him to the last. The one thing that troubled him then was "the depth and extent of the misery of his fellow creatures separated from the divine harmony;" but even this trouble passed away, and in a manner which he himself has described, in words reminding us of Augustine's confessions: "O Lord, I remember that Thou art omnipotent, that I called Thee Father, and I felt that I loved Thee, and I was made quiet in Thy will, and I waited for deliverance through Thee; Thou hadst pity on me when no man could help me; I saw that meekness under suffering was shewed to us in the most affecting example of Thy Son, and Thou hast taught me to follow Him, and I said, "Thy will, O Father, be done."

So John Woolman died as he had lived, one of the purest exemplifications of the religion of love. No wonder he was so great a favourite with Charles Lamb. I think, too, you will be glad to have become somewhat acquainted with a man whose life and character had on them the stamp of such simple and genuine piety.

Letters to a Ministerial Nephew.

II.

ON THE LENGTH OF SERMONS.

My Dear Bob,—You tell me that you feel somewhat sore when people gently hint that the sermon might be shorter with advantage, since, as you put it, you never give them "a screed" of more than thirty-five minutes, and rarely exceed the half-hour. You complain of the degeneracy of hearers in these latter days. A hundred years ago an hour was no unusual allowance for a sermon. Barrow's famous Spital sermon took three hours and a-half in delivery, and the great Puritan preachers were not unaccustomed to give the hour-glass another turn. Yes, Bob, but all that was before the days of bicycles, telephones, halfpenny newspapers, and quick-change artists. Those were leisurely times, when men knew nothing of the hurry-scurry of modern life; now we must have anything brief, sharp, and to the point. The immense popularity of "Tit Bits" is indicative of much. People are incapable of steady reading through an octavo volume. They must have it served up in a paragraph. Milton appals them; they are impatient of the long speeches in Shakespeare; while the mere thought of Gibbon, with his eight stately volumes, crushes them like a steam-roller. They take their history by snippets and their science from a shilling primer. Everything must be served up hot-and-hot, and no cold joints on the sideboard.

So, dear nephew of mine, it is no use kicking against the pricks. The sermon of to-day must fit into the life and habits of to-day, and preachers must learn the art of coming quickly to the point. At the same time, it is well to remember that the clock is not the only measure of the length of a sermon. *A sermon is long that seems so*, although by the clock it may not exceed fifteen minutes. And a sermon is short that seems short, although it runs on to an hour. Time has nothing to do with it. A sermon is measured not by clocks and watches but by the state of our minds. Are we interested? Then time passes quickly. Is the sermon heavy and dull? Then the minutes seem hours. I remember a great preacher who, when he took his natural swing, preached for about fifty minutes, and nobody said it was long. But we are not all great preachers, and there is many a man who has enough in him to make an interesting twenty minutes' discourse who, each minute after that, only repeats himself.

Long introductions make sermons appear long even if they do not exceed the regulation half-hour. An avenue a mile in length leading at last to a diminutive cottage is a mistake. Come to grips with your subject at once. In like manner, extended applications are apt to be tedious. There are preachers who call their hearers to chew the cud of their sermons over again by endless repetitions or by long drawn out applications. A sermon that doesn't apply itself has no business to be preached. The boy who was whipped by his pious mother, and then exhorted, begged that he might be let off the exhortation. He felt that the subject had been sufficiently applied in the whipping, and exhortations were tedious and unedifying.

A slow utterance, a monotonous voice, a

droning manner, a face that never glows, never lights up, never flashes, make a sermon short by the clock long in the feeling of the audience. The attempt to prove everything, especially proving things that don't want proving, is a weariness to the flesh. "We admit it, we admit it all," your people are ready to say; but still you must go on proving it for their good. Downright affirmations are sometimes better than a volume of argumentations.

How are you to make your sermons short? Well, one way to make a short sermon is to stop. I know that to leave off by the watch is a mechanical way of leaving off, but better that than going on after you have really finished. John Bright always knew when and how he was going to conclude. I heard one of your famous speakers at your recent Conference, who made four distinct perorations before he could stop. The audience was as conscious as he was himself that he was painfully feeling about in his own mind for an appropriate ending, and they cheered each peroration with impatient gratitude—impatient that he had kept on so long, gratitude that at last he had finished. A live sermon or a live speech should, of course, come to its conclusion because it has naturally reached its term. However, if a sermon cannot be stopped any other way, you must stunt it. Strike it by lightning! Trip it up! Any way, get it stopped!

Another way to make a sermon short is to leave out a good deal that to you seems appropriate and even necessary. A preacher is smitten with the ambition to be thorough, to round off his subject, to say everything that can be said—at any rate, to say all the important things. He thinks unless he does so his sermon will be full of ragged edges and incomplete arguments. But ten to one his audience will know nothing and suspect nothing of what has been left out. Judicious omission is a grand secret of short sermons. Hearers do not grieve, O preacher, for anything you leave out—not ordinarily. You need not attempt to exhaust that idea to-day. Exhaustive sermons are apt to be exhausting sermons.

Yet, Bob, the final word is this: Be interesting, and your longest sermon will seem short.

Your affectionate uncle,

THEOPHILUS BROWN.

Cremation.

It is surprising how many good people become stumbling blocks in the path of reform; and they *are* good people too, the very best of well-meaning individuals. Yet they would, as it were, put up a "No thoroughfare" board, if they could get their own way, or "Beware of the dog," or perhaps some notice touching "man traps and spring-guns" on every such road. And just because these dear obstructionists are so really excellent, active in many good works, and shining lights in their particular groove of life, they are all the more difficult to combat. For when it comes to a tug-of-war between conventionality and modern reform they know how to pull.

In the opinion of such, not to hide away their sacred dead decently many feet below the surface, not to enclose the remains in the latest patent air-tight coffin—would be to cast a slur on the memory of the departed. "The well-known form which in the finished past our careless glances knew," must be enshrined in such a way as to preserve it intact to the latest possible moment. The very idea of cremation fills them with horror as connected with those they love, and yet they will calmly consent to their own bodies being submitted to the fiery ordeal, if their survivors desire it. Such is their sweet unreasonableness! Many a time have they listened to the phrase, "Dust to dust, ashes to ashes," without in the least realising how meaningless are the words in our present-day burial ceremony. Let us implore these lovers of old customs to stand aside and, as they will not put their own shoulders to the wheel of the reform van, at least to make room for those who will and can. Perhaps after a while they will cease to hang back, and then their zeal will be all the warmer and more helpful for that season of inaction.

Who that has walked past a country churchyard has not been struck by the fact that the road he strides along is many feet lower in level than the grassy mounds. The ground enclosed as God's acre often has risen even to the *top* of its boundary wall. As you pass along and look up, you see the green surface looking like verdant velvet against the sky. How has this come about? It is not that the road has been cut down, but that the ground within has swollen upward, crowded with the clay tenements of our

lost treasures. Is this a sight likely to cheer us if we have helped to increase the ghastly mass?

"Bring out your dead," to repeat the old plague cry. Yes, bring them out, but not to consign them to Mother Earth's dark bosom there to pass through all the horrors of slow disintegration. Were they "beautiful and pleasant in their lives?" Then why lay up for ourselves memories of unspeakable horror, such as cannot fail to haunt us when we dare allow ourselves to dwell on the *afterwards?*

It is said, and truly enough, that the soil absorbs all impurities; but then, what about the period during which this process of absorption is going on? And every drop of moisture, from whatever source, must filter gradually through, until it finally mingles with the springs, wells and streams among the lower grounds. At Churchdown, in Gloucestershire, a small place of worship stands upon a charmingly green hill-top, surrounded by its "Garden of Sleep." A wonderful legend relating to the devil and his predilections is attached to the building of this church, but no one pays much heed to the old story in this enlightened time. The beautiful situation, however, with primrose-starred banks in the spring-time and blackberries in the autumn, attracts many parties from adjoining neighbourhoods. What more natural, after a long ramble over breezy hills, than to assemble in some convenient spot for tea and rest? Needless to say the cottagers, both in the churchyard, and *at the foot of the steep hill,* all lay themselves out for providing such refreshment! It is difficult to recall this fact without a feeling of deadly nausea.

In Tewkesbury Abbey there is an ancient tomb on which rests the stone effigy of a man. He is apparently in the latest stage of decay and the sculptor has portrayed this condition with consummate skill. He must have loved the work while guiding his tools with such telling effect. The flesh of the figure has shrunk until each bone shows up clearly as if about to break through the surface. Every accessory is, of course, suitable and worthy of attention; but, lest one should miss any of the gruesome particulars, the attendant verger points out the carven presentments of "worm, snail, and newt," taking their share in the ghastly process of demolition.

When we consider all these things, we cannot but ask ourselves, "Is it true kindness to the deceased which prompts our opposition to cremation?" Is it not rather that we love the opinion of the majority better than we loved our friend? Granted that the present costly ceremony is prohibitory to all save the wealthy, it is not expense alone which forms the obstacle. No, it is Prejudice, with a very big P, bulking in the path of progress and saying doggedly, "Thus far shalt thou go and no farther. Ancient and popular customs are the best." And as long as this attitude of mind is maintained, were the cost of cremation reduced to-morrow, no good would come of it.

Cheapness then, alone, will fail to throw down the walls of this strong citadel—conventionality—though they be stormed ever so persistently. Only constant repetition of the most salient points in this reform, the hammering in on every available opportunity, that continual dropping which wears even stones away; these alone will at length prevail. When the people demand a crematorium within reach of both pocket and sight, they will get it; but most of us require first educating up to the point at issue. Therefore, let those who have this subject most warmly at heart take up the task of recommending it to others. Let them ventilate it in all possible places and at all suitable times, in the slums as well as among the villa residences. Those who have a gospel to preach should preach it now fearlessly, boldly, and withal temperately, nor be discouraged when such terms as "crank," "faddist," "fanatic," etc., fly about their ears.

Let no one despair and echo the pessimistic wail to the effect that cremation will *never* become acceptable to men. It has already been embraced as a beneficent fact by some who in worldly matters stood at the top of the social ladder. This is quite natural, and as it should be, for *education* alone can break the fetters which old superstitions have woven about the human reason. The ancient order passes slowest of all from the tenacious minds of our poorer brothers and sisters, as witness the putting on of deep mourning and shutting out of the light of day in tiny homes where the first luxury can be but ill afforded, and only too little *light* of any kind finds entrance at the best of times.

RUTH MILLS.

Our Message to the Unattached.

AN UNSPOKEN CONFERENCE SPEECH.*

It is twenty years ago since Dr. Fairbairn, the principal of Mansfield College, Oxford, told us that Christianity had lost its hold on the educated classes at one end of English society, and on the great masses of working people at the other end. Whatever may have been the case when Dr. Fairbairn wrote, his diagnosis no longer describes the situation. For during the last twenty years we have been living through a great revival of religion, none the less real and significant because quiet and undemonstrative. Many signs of this revival might be mentioned, but I point out two only: (1) The changed attitude of Science to Religion and of Religion to Science. There has been a wonderful abatement in the hostile attitude of Science to Religion, and the old suspicion that Religion had for Science has disappeared. Science has learned that there are more things in heaven and earth than can be brought into the laboratory, while Religion has thankfully accepted from Science much light on many problems of human life and destiny. The conversion of Mr. Romanes on the one hand, and the noble work done by the late Henry Drummond on the other are indicative of much. (2) During the last twenty years there has been a wonderful quickening of zeal and activity on the part of all the churches. Never have the gifts been so numerous; never have the enterprises been so varied and vigorous. Churches have become more and more centres of social reform. It is true there may be zeal and activity without any real growth in spiritual life, yet I would fain believe that the marvellous outburst of energy and enterprise, the wonderful efflorescence as of a new Spring, proceed from deep inner sources, and are the signs of an increasing vitality. In spite of all men say, never was the work of the churches more abundant than to-day.

Still, Dr. Fairbairn's account has more truth in it than perhaps we are willing to acknowledge. While open hostility may be abated there are yet very many in our midst for whom Religion has no attraction, and on whom the churches have no hold. I am not now referring to those who preach the gospel of pure secularism, as if the ills of the human soul could be cured by denying the existence of soul. Still less am I thinking of the flippant or the vicious, or of those who are consumed by the greed of money, or whose better self is dissipated by the greed of pleasure. I am rather thinking of those thoughtful high-minded men and women who form a not inconsiderable proportion both of the educated and the working classes, who stand outside all religious organisations, who have neither part nor lot in church life, who have given up the old habits of worship, and for whom the generally accepted doctrines are either vanishing illusions or exploded superstitions. These are the unattached of whom I am thinking. I cannot now pause to discuss the reasons for their estrangement. Some have been driven from the church by the inconsistencies of religious people; some by the incredible dogmas which have been offered them for Christianity—a stone for bread; some by the childish insistence upon points of ritual as of the essence of religion; some by scientific and historical criticisms, and a still larger number by something in the air, they know not what, something in the atmosphere of social life and newspapers and magazines, which has slowly, insensibly, but surely made them indifferent to Religion, till at last they are ready to acquiesce in its disappearance in its organised form, and to argue that a man can do very well without it.

Now it is absolutely necessary to remember that many of these persons are men deserving our highest respect. They are upright, honourable, lovable, living blameless and unselfish lives. Some of them are devoted with singular earnestness to public service and the cause of social welfare. They are intelligent, kindly, sympathetic, with a large sense of duty. For these virtues are plants that bloom not only within the borders of the church, they flourish with a wonderful disdain of ecclesiastical restrictions in the unhallowed domain of heresy. Nay, sometimes are found blossoming into a strange luxuriance on the outlying wastes of society. But Religion has no charm for these

*Owing to want of time, Mr. Wood, who was announced to speak on the above subject at the public meeting of the Leicester Conference, was compelled to abandon the idea of making a speech, and contented himself by explaining in a few words the lines he had intended to follow. The speech was given the following Sunday night at the Great Meeting, Leicester, and is here reported.

men; they do not feel the need of it. Sometimes, indeed, they think it stands in the way of that social advancement which is the only thing they care for. In a very true measure they are good men judged by whatever standard you choose to apply.

Dr. Bruce, the late Principal of the Free Church College, Glasgow, wrote some ten years ago:—"I am disposed to think that a great and steadily increasing proportion of the moral worth of society lies outside the church, separated from it not by godlessness, but rather by exceptionally intense moral earnestness."

I do not find anything that ministers to despair in that statement. It may puzzle us for awhile to reconcile the presence of moral earnestness with religious indifference; but surely while we lament the religious indifference we should say to the moral earnestness—"All Hail!"

Mr. Arnold Thomas, Chairman of the Congregational Union, speaking last October of these same persons, said they presented one of the most anxious and painful problems the church had to deal with. "We do not know what to make of them, how to interpret them."

Well, the church that does not know what to make of moral earnestness when it comes in strange garb is in a parlous condition. These men believe in truth and goodness, and social service, and human uplifting. They have unmistakably "moral earnestness." Now I venture to say that the attitude and policy of the church when confronted by moral earnestness, arrayed in whatever outlandish fashion, should be that of the open door, and that her word should be, "Angel of God! come in." For if moral earnestness is not an angel of God, what is it?

These men are better Christians than they know. I do not say they are perfect Christians —(perfect Christians are hard to find even inside Free Churches)—not with all their nature Christianised, not full full-orbed in their Christianity, and yet Christians since they love the things that are lovely, and labour for the things that are righteous, merciful, pure, and good.

Yet they suffer loss from their aloofness and detachment. To renounce worship, to set aside devotion, to cut oneself loose from the one great permanent organisation of Christendom for the redemption of humanity, for the redressing of wrongs, and the amelioration of conditions,—an organisation which has penetrated to all lands and has persisted through twenty centuries; to give up all culture of the God-consciousness; to seek no help from the hills whence for endless generations the waters of life have refreshed the souls and renewed the energies of all that has been fair and sweet and gracious and triumphant in the service of man—all this is to suffer loss. And, alas! in many cases there comes in course of time a certain deterioration; a certain ossification of the finer sympathies; a growing difficulty in bearing up against ingratitude and defeat; a lack of human feeling even in the midst of human service. It is said of certain forms of charity organisations, divorced from a religious motive, based only on politico-economical considerations, that before long they end in a good deal more organisation than charity. And there are many brave human workers, who without the inspiration of religion become at last hard in feeling, the slaves of organisations and systems and societies, wanting in softness and kindly patience. And some learn to be spectators instead of combatants in the warfare that goes on between good and evil, while a greater number answer to Wordsworth's description of evil days:—

> When good men
> On every side fall off we know not how
> To selfishness, disguised in gentle names
> Of peace, and quiet, and domestic love.

For the path of honour and human service is hard to find, and harder to keep, without some deeper, stronger inspiration than can be found in a man's own sense of duty. I do not say that it is impossible—God forbid—but it is like the bridge that leads to Mahomet's paradise, finer than a hair and sharper than a sword, and few there be that tread it in safety.

More serious still is the loss to the church by the falling out of these persons from its ranks. How much might they not contribute to our counsels, to our stock of sympathy, to our outlook and our enterprise. We need just those elements they are rich in, the social conscience, the ethical emphasis, the reforming spirit. We think we could give them something; I am sure

they could give us much. For with this social and ethical and reforming element our thought of God would be enlarged, gathering into itself more abundantly all things "mighty, grave, and sweet."

What then is our message to these, the unattached?

I. That when all the legitimate work of science and criticism is admitted, when all that these modern forces can shake of the old citadel is level with the dust, there remains the central thing unshaken—God. It is ours to shew that Religion has still an adequate ground in right reason, that the great facts of spiritual experience, *i.e.*, the shame of sin, the longing for perfection, the felt need of some noble inspiration for the bitter-sweet trial of life than earth can supply, the cry for comfort in sorrow, the heart's hunger for a diviner good than ease and wealth can furnish, that these aspects of spiritual experience are quite as much facts as the stones under the geologist's hammer, and are permanent elements of human life. It is ours to show that a man may pray and not after all be a fool, and that the neatest laws of chemistry and biology still leave the soul without its daily bread. Dogmas, miracles, rites, ceremonies, superstitions, may all pass into the limbo of the no-longer-credible, and yet spiritual facts are and will be what they have been, the ultimate realities of all being, filled with the promise and potency of a life transcending all material things, and of a blessedness which no lapse of ages can exhaust. We have this message to give the unattached. You cannot forego your spiritual birthright; you must not ignore the deepest things of your own nature. Religion cannot be lightly dismissed as a played-out fiction. On the contrary, it has not only its moral but its intellectual justification. Man can no more blot out permanently the adorable thought, God, from his mind, than he can blot out the sun from the heavens. Dull fools have often by their theologies made it a thought harsh and crabbed, but for you it may yet be "musical as is Apollo's lyre." Moreover, it has its verification both in experience and right reason.

II. Our second message to the unattached is this:—That this great organisation, the church, exists really not for the cultivation of rare and closet pieties, nor to get a way for intellectual and philosophical theories, nor for the defence of a system of dogma, nor to soothe men with dreams of a visionary bliss beyond the grave, but for the cure, here and now, of the sins and sorrows that crush down vast masses of mankind with a weight heavy as frost; to save the fallen in the moral way; to make the crooked straight and the rough places plain, and to bring in the acceptable year of the Lord. The acceptable year of the Lord! What is that but the golden age of which all the prophets have prophesied, and all the poets have sung, and all the dreamers of good have dreamt—that fairer social day for which all true hearts in all ages have longed and laboured—that new humanity when the fair brotherhood of men Christ came to establish shall be realised in our midst. Men turn away from the church with impatience when it casts its hopes for purity, peace, and happiness into a land far away in the skies. They will listen to the church when the church learns to repeat the message of Christ. "Lo, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you!" Here on this familiar earth is its seat. Shew men that the materials out of which it is to be constructed, and the means by which it is to be brought about are within and around them, in their own hearts and hands, that no miracle is needed to bring it near, that they have but to live as God made them capable of living, and this flower-laden earth will become the paradise they seek. The kingdom of God is an ideal ready at any moment to break through the veil of earthly things. To realise it is the mission of the church. Men stand aloof from the church, see no good in it, wish it on the whole out of the way, only because the church, as they have conceived it, has been so exclusively concerned with the other life, with far-off contingencies of happiness and misery, with unprofitable speculation, with puerile rites, with getting one's soul saved, whatever becomes of anyone else's soul.

Tell them that the church is Humanity in its noblest mood of brotherhood, service, and comfort, that the church is for present healings rather than future compensations, for present enriching, present happiness, and present peace. Shew them a church in which indifference to the public weal is branded as a crime, and in

which a wrong to humanity is mourned as a wrong to God. Shew them a church which has help and supply for poor shipwrecked mariners, a church which sends its strong sons to man the lifeboat, and gathers its children who can give no other aid on to the shore to send a cheer across the waves. Shew them a church in which love is lord and king, love which is never so lovely as when braving danger and death for human redress, never so mighty as when stooping to human weakness. Shew them a church like this, and they will say with joyful lips, "Where thou goest we will go; thy people shall be our people, and thy God our God."

The Country Cousin in London.

The months of May and June witness the annual migration of the country cousin to London. Superfine people look down upon him, patronise him, make fun of him. His garb has not exactly the Bond Street cut; he is not *blasé* and indifferent; he actually enjoys the streets as well as the theatre. The fashionable Londoners, the smart folk of the season, smile at such people, regarding them as inferior creatures, with lower pleasures, lower fancies, lower everything. (Tell it not in Gath! but is not this sometimes the attitude of the London minister to his country cousin—the minister from Lancashire or Devon?) If they only knew! These country cousins are as much their superiors in everything but gowns and trappings, and sumptuous apparatus, as seriousness is superior to frivolity, gravity to perpetual grinning, cultivated intelligence to cultivated vacuity, knowledge to ignorance, and high and cheerful purpose to splendid ennui, and boredom tempered by elegant buffoonery! They know immensely more; they feel far more deeply and generously; they enjoy themselves vastly better, and more wisely. They it is who really go to see the pictures of the year; not that they may chatter about them the same evening in a superficial what-does-it-matter tone to their neighbour at the dinner-table, but that they may obtain a firm impression concerning the paintings they prefer, may remember them permanently, and be able to talk of them with accuracy and judgment, months and years hence. What does the *dilettante* of the season know of the solid enjoyment reaped by such unpretentious visitors from a two-hours' visit to Burlington House or New Gallery, followed by a dish of iced strawberries and cream? Such simple, cheap pleasures escape the wearied Timons of the West-end. The country cousins, too, it is that seriously seize the opportunity to stand long and earnestly before the pastel of Millet's "Angelus, and to form a deliberate and lasting judgment respecting Corot's landscapes. We do not say that their conclusions are always sound. Sometimes, perhaps, they are betrayed into a little excessive enthusiasm. But too much enthusiasm is better than too little, and, at any rate, they escape that mediocrity which Sainte-Beuve truly said is invariably associated with the inability to praise without qualification.

Did art, science, or literature depend upon Londoners, it would be a mere raree-show to talk about. Smart people have neither leisure nor inclination to read. Most of the serious reading is done in the provinces, or in those parts of London which the *beau monde* would look on with scorn. There are two worlds, the world of pleasure pure and simple, and the world of work varied by study, serious diversion, and noble holiday-making. More is written and printed about the former, but the latter, happily, is still the larger, and forms the staple and substance of the community. It would be a bad look out for us were it otherwise. To the rightly contemplative spectator, the season is but a theatre, and the men and women in it merely players.

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Seed Corn.

He is a wise man who can hit the mark between taking life too easily and taking it too hard.

Beware of lying over long in the dust of penitence: the soul was not made to grovel in the dust but to face the sun and the wind in manful effort to do well and to do better.

The thought that God thinks of us gives us self-respect.

He is wanting in self-reverence who tries to copy another's distinctions rather than to evoke and cultivate his own, to strain after another's dimensions rather than to be as perfect as he can within his own.

"Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification." Yet how many people appear to think that to edify we must *displease*. Their only notion of edification is to expose and rebuke faults. Yet simply to give another pleasure may involve for him a whole train of blessings. We never know how much further or higher good we are ensuring in simply causing a human heart to sing for joy. A new suavity, a new tendency, a new generosity, a new hopefulness appears as the result of ministering pleasure to men.

It is because religion is so simple that it is so misunderstood.

The Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man may as easily become threadbare phrases as any daily repeated dogma of the Church. The watchwords of Liberal Theology are in as great danger of passing into shibboleths as the watchwords of the narrowest orthodoxy.

All religion has relation to life, and the life of religion is to do good.

Heaven is for all who love: hell is the assembly of the selfish.

Society exists not for the sake of private property, but private property for the sake of society!

It is not the equalization of capital that is needed, but its moralization.

I have never met with a *little* Englander. We all want a *great* England. But great in what? There are two conceptions. (1) Great in armies, fleet, territory, dominion, wealth, luxury, military prowess; or (2) Great in literature and art, in peaceful commerce, in industrial enterprise, in the strength of moral purpose, in the intelligence of her people, and in the righteousness which exalteth a nation.

The lives that look easiest to you feel the pressure somewhere.

Hope.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN OF GEIBEL BY RUTH WILLS.

However wintry blasts may blow,
And wintry storms howl near us,
Still fiercely strewing ice and snow,
The Spring will come to cheer us.

However closely fogs may throng
And seem to bide unshaken,
The sun will pierce them through ere long
And earth to joy re-waken.

Blow on, wild storms, blow on with might,
No anxious fears possess me;
Some happy morn, with footsteps light,
The Spring will come to bless me.

Then earth shall ope her wondering eyes,
Aroused from winter-dreaming,
And smile up to the happy skies
With face all blissful beaming.

Shall wreathe her head with blossoms fair,
Wheat-ears and roses twining,
And win the brooks to murmurs clear,
As if for joy repining.

And so my heart, though tempests gloom,
Be not a prey to sadness:
The promised May-day yet shall bloom
And earth revolve in gladness.

Though days grow dark, and evil reign
As hell itself were round thee,
Trust thou in God, and soon again
The Spring-time shall surround thee.

THE CHILDREN'S PAGE.

Child's Song in Spring.

The silver birch is a dainty lady,
She wears a satin gown;
The elm tree makes the old churchyard shady,
She will not live in town.

The English oak is a sturdy fellow,
He gets his green coat late;
The willow is smart in a suit of yellow,
While brown the beech trees wait.

Such a gay, green gown God gives the larches—
As green as He is good!
The hazels hold up their arms for arches
When spring rides through the wood.

The chestnut's proud, and the lilac's pretty,
The poplar's gentle and tall,
But the plane tree's kind to the poor dull city—
I love him best of all!

E. NESBIT.

Answer to a Child's Question.

Do you know what the birds say? The sparrow, the dove,
The linnet, and thrush say, "I love and I love!"
In the winter they're silent—the wind is so strong.
What it says, I don't know, but it sings a loud song.
But green leaves, and blossoms, and sunny warm weather,
And singing and loving—all come back together.
But the lark is so brimful of gladness and love,
The green fields below him, the blue sky above,
That he sings, and he sings, and for ever sings he—
"I love my love, and my love loves me!"

S. T. COLERIDGE.

Cherries.

Under the tree the farmer said,
Smiling and shaking his wise old head:
"Cherries are ripe! but then you know,
There's the grass to cut and the corn to hoe;
We can gather the cherries any day,
But when the sun shines we must make the hay;
To-night, when the work has all been done,
We'll muster the boys, for fruit and fun."

Up on the tree a robin said,
Perking and cocking his saucy head,
"Cherries are ripe! and so to-day
We'll gather them while you make the hay;
For we are the boys with no corn to hoe,
No cows to milk, and no grass to mow."
At night the farmer said: "Here's a trick!
Those roguish robins have had their pick."

F. E. WEATHERLEY.

Mr. Nobody.

I know a funny little man,
As quiet as a mouse,
Who does the mischief that is done
In everybody's house!
There's no one ever see his face,
And yet we all agree
That every plate we break was cracked
By Mr. Nobody.

'Tis he who always tears our books,
Who leaves the door ajar,
He pulls the buttons from our shirts,
And scatters pins afar;
That squeaking door will always squeak,
For prithee, don't you see,
We leave the oiling to be done
By Mr. Nobody.

He puts damp wood upon our fires,
That kettles cannot boil;
His are the feet that bring in mud,
And all the carpets soil.
The papers always are mislaid,
Who had them last but he?
There's no one tosses them about
But Mr. Nobody.

The finger-marks upon the door
By none of us are made;
We never leave the blinds unclosed,
To let the curtains fade.
The ink we never spill, the boots
That lying round you see
Are not our boots; they all belong
To Mr. Nobody.

The Cats' Tea Party.*

Five little pussy-cats, invited out to tea,
Cried: "Mother, let us go—oh, do! for good we'll surely be.
We'll wear our bibs and hold our things as you have shown us how—
Spoons in right paws, cups in left—and make a pretty bow;
We'll always say 'Yes, if you please,' and 'only half of that.'"
"Then go, my darling children," said the happy mother cat.
The five little pussy-cats went out that night to tea,
Their heads were smooth and glossy, their tails were swinging free;
They held their things as they had learned, and tried to be p lite;—
With snowy bibs beneath their chins, they were a pretty sight.
But, alas, for manners beautiful, and coats as soft as silk!
The moment that the little kits were asked to take some milk,
They dropped their spoons, forgot to bow, and—oh what do you think?
They put their noses in the cups and all began to drink!
Yes, every naughty little kit set up a miou for more,
Then knocked the tea-cups over, and scampered through the door.

—F. E. WEATHERLEY.

* Four lines of advice omitted.